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The Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine on Lithuanian Security Development

After regaining independence in 1990, Lithuania chose a strategic path to integrate into Western organizations, with clear priorities for the European Union and NATO, the biggest military alliance in the world. In Russia, such direction was regarded as a threat to its influence in the post-Soviet area. Hence the article seeks to provide an overview of Lithuania's security policy, with specific emphasis on the role of Russia, in the recent quarter century. The aim is to distinguish key priorities for Lithuania and assess their practical implementation. Furthermore, the paper seeks to analyse the impact of the war in Ukraine, both on Lithuanian and regional security as well as the development of key security priorities.

Introduction

Western world considers Russia's aggression in Ukraine, most notably the annexation of Crimea and the escalation of conflict in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, as a threat to international security. For example, former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen described Russia's illegal and illegitimate aggression as the "greatest challenge to Europe's security in a generation"[1]. Other international leaders share a similar view: Barack Obama, President of the United States, said that Russia poses a "threat to peace in Europe"[2], while German Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasized that "Russia regards one of its neighbours, Ukraine, as part of a sphere of influence. After the horrors of two world wars and the end of the Cold War, this calls the entire European peaceful order into question".[3]

Recent events also caused anxiety among former Soviet Union coun-

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[1] NATO, *NATO justified in reinforcing defence of Allies, Secretary General says in visit to Poland*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_109562.htm, 07 05 2014.
[2] Pace J., *Obama: Russia threatens peace in Europe,* http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/obama-russia-threat-peace-europe, 03 09 2014.
[3] Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Reden/2014/2014-11-17-merkel-lowy-institute-sydney_en.html;jsessionid=8741BA6D1E577CDE3C01FAE0F640858B.s1t2?nn=393812, 17 11 2014.

tries, especially in the Baltics, which shares a border with Russia. In the words of the President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves, neighbour countries cannot remain calm as they see "a collapse of current security architecture in Europe, which relied on both the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter".[4]

Yet the security crisis could also be regarded as a positive catalyst, as it creates incentives for both countries and international organizations to pay more attention to the issues related with security. Due to the high media attention to the conflict in Ukraine, the public in Russia's neighbouring post-Soviet countries is more likely to support additional security measures, rather than oppose it, even if it requires considerable financial resources. In other words, even if Russia's aggression in Ukraine poses an international security challenge, it also opens up a window of opportunity for necessary reforms to reduce vulnerabilities.

This paper observes and analyses the development of security issues during the last two decades and defines the current perception of main threats in Lithuania. Further analysis seeks to answer whether the conflict in Ukraine, which escalated after Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the growing instability became an incentive for rapid and concrete political decisions to improve security environment in accordance with long-term priorities.

1. Russia's Role in Lithuania's Security Policy

In theory, after regaining independence in 1990, Lithuania could have chosen one of three security policy directions: neutrality, enhanced cooperation with other small states and membership in a big military/political alliance. While neutrality and cooperation with other Baltic states were considered relatively viable alternatives in 1990-1995, it was soon agreed among political elites that the strategic goal for Lithuania is to become a member in both the European Union and NATO.[5] These aims were regarded as a clear signal of Lithuania's intent to "return to the West" and, with implementation of necessary reforms, create a Western-like democratic state.[6]

According to various researchers, the Lithuanian threat perception and security priorities were determined mainly by two factors: the geopolitical si-

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[4] Bender J., *Estonian President: Europe's Security Architecture 'Has Collapsed'*, http://www.businessinsider.com/europes-security-architecture-has-collapsed-2014-9, 19 09 2014.

[5] Miniotaitė G, "Lithuania's Evolving Security and Defence Policy: Problems and Prospects", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, 2006, p. 177–190.

[6] Bartulytė D., "Back in the USSR, or New Initiatives in Lithuania's Foreign Policy after the Dual Enlargement", Brenau University, http://www.norface.net/upload/documents/documenten/s1-budryte.pdf.

tuation and historical experience. For example, Margarita Šešelgytė uses Harald Muller's description of security culture, which is a "set of values, norms, rules and practices with regard to security that gives thinking and acting in security field of a specific state a particular, sometimes singular pattern". Hence, according to the author, Lithuanian security culture was highly influenced by:

- The experience of Soviet communism – occupation formed a specific perception of Lithuanian society towards human rights issues and state's role;
- Memories of the past with emphasis on anti-Soviet resistance and antagonism towards Russia.[7]

In his study, Vaidotas Urbelis elaborated on historic factors that shaped Lithuanian security perceptions. He analysed Lithuanian "strategic culture", which is described as a "set of norms, values, expectations and behavioural patterns of Lithuanian security policy actors". Urbelis agrees that during the first years after regaining independence Lithuanian security identity was based on antagonism towards Russia; it was understood that after the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia tried to keep the Baltic states in its sphere of influence and to prevent NATO's enlargement. In order to "consolidate independence and to be firmly anchored in the community of Western states"[8], Lithuania has nevertheless chosen a strategic direction to integrate with the West. In other words, Western countries, in spite of their pragmatism, were understood as "us", while Russia was understood as an oppositional "them".

After joining the EU and NATO, Lithuania had to adapt this approach to the wider interests of the allied countries. For example, global threats and risks, such as globalization, terrorism and transnational crime, were underlined in the wake of September 11, 2001 terrorist acts in the United States. Therefore, key strategic documents, such as the national security strategy of 2005, emphasized that "Lithuania perceives its national security as a part of NATO and EU security policy". NATO was especially important, as it shaped key aspects of the defence policy. While no direct military threats were noted in 2005, Lithuania pledged to maintain NATO as "the main organization of collective security, which guarantees the security of Lithuania under the Fifth Article of the North Atlantic Treaty". [9]

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[7] Šešelgytė M., "Lithuanian security culture", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, Foreign Policy Research Center, Issue II, Vilnius, 2010, p. 25.
[8] Šleivytė J., *Russia's European Agenda and the Baltic State,* Routledge, 2009, p. 133.
[9] Republic Of Lithuania Seimas, *Resolution on the approval of the national security strategy,* http://www3. lrs.lt/pls/inter2/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=262943, 28 05 2002.

Yet neither these novelties nor some positive developments in official Lithuanian-Russian relations, such as ratification of border treaty, changed perceptions towards Russia. It was understood as a country that posed a risk to sovereignty; it was important for Lithuanian security both in terms of historic factors (e.g. the issue of Russia's unwillingness to discuss compensation for the damage caused to Lithuania during occupation) and other strategic policies, such as energy dependence, espionage and others.[10] Furthermore, the security strategy noted for the first time the need to promote freedom and democracy in the Eastern neighbourhood, such as in Ukraine, Belarus and others, so that these countries could create a safer environment for Lithuania from Russia. Such initiatives are regarded as hostile in Russia.[11]

National security strategy was renewed in 2011, with even more emphasis on NATO's V article and concrete internal and external threats. It must be noted that the document mentioned cyber-attacks and information threats, which was a novelty in Lithuanian security policies. It was directly influenced by cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007[12], which were suspected to be caused by Russia, and Russian aggression in Georgia in 2008, which was strongly condemned in Lithuania[13].

It could be concluded that throughout the years since independence, Lithuanian security policy has had specific emphasis on Russia. While there were some adaptation to changing security circumstances (such as growing spectre of international threats), the key aspects remained:

- Emphasis on NATO's V article as a guarantee against intervention; [14]
- Sustainability of buffer zone between itself and mainland Russia and counter-balance regional influence of Russia by promoting democracy in Ukraine, Belarus and other countries;
- Stability of supply of energy at affordable price;
- Maintenance of international visibility and influence through participation in organizations, especially EU and NATO.[15]

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[10] Budrytė D., "The Dilemma of Dual Loyalty: Lithuania and Transatlantic Tensions?" in Smith D.J. (ed.) *The Baltic States and Their Region: Old Europe or New?*, Radopi, Amsterdam – New York, NY, 2005, p. 47.

[11] Šešelgytė M., "Lithuania" in Biehl H, Giegerich B., Jonas A., *Strategic Cultures in Europe: Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, New York, Springer Science & Business Media, 2013, p. 220.

[12] The Economist, *Estonia and Russia: cyber riot,* http://www.economist.com/node/9163598, 10 05 2007.

[13] Geopolitika, *Baltijos valstybių ir Lenkijos prezidentai smerkia Rusijos veiksmus,* [Geopolitics, *President of the Baltic states and Poland condemn Russia's actions*], http://www.geopolitika.lt/index.php/index.php?artc=2432, 09 08 2008.

[14] Molis A., "Standpoint of the Baltic States towards NATO and ESDP: the Russian factor", *Lithuanian foreign policy review*, (20) 2008, p. 18.

[15] Galbreath D.J., Lašas A., Lamoreaux J.W., "Continuity and Change in the Baltic Sea Region: Comparing Foreign Policies", London: Rodopi, 2008, p. 82.

As security perception and pragmatic interests coincided, official defence policy was regarded as "natural, obvious and with no alternatives" – a broad agreement of the political elite. Hence, the main features of Lithuanian security culture are elitism of security community, militarisation of security, strong political consensus and state domination.[16] In other words, the greatest effect on security concept of the Baltic States was created by the hostile ambitions of the neighbouring states, specifically Russia.[17]

However, clear priorities did not always lead to practical implementation. For example, the Lithuanian defence budget was reduced from 1.4% of GDP in 2004[18], when Lithuania became member of NATO, to only 0.8% in 2013, which is among the lowest in NATO and inconsistent with NATO's defence spending target of 2%.[19] Furthermore, in spite of the emphasized Russian threat, Lithuania reformed its armed forces to shift away from the concept of territorial defence to quickly deployable forces, which could be effective for the range of internationals missions undertaken by NATO. Hence, with the suspension of conscription, wartime strength was reduced from 39,000 to 17,000[20]. Lithuania also did not have any cyber security capabilities or clearly-defined strategy up until 2015.[21] Lastly, Lithuania did not implement any practical steps in order to reduce energy dependence from Russia, with Russia remaining its sole gas supplier[22] up until the end of 2014. Hence it could be concluded that Lithuania, even with clearly expressed security priorities, lacked incentives to practically reduce its vulnerabilities.

2. Lithuanian Security Perception in the Wake of the Security Crisis in the Region

In 2012 the Lithuanian Parliament passed a renewed version of the national security strategy with the purpose of defining the "vital and primary

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[16] Urbelis, p. 183–186.

[17] Molis, p. 13.

[18] Bugajski J., Teleki I., *Atlantic Bridges– America's New European Allies,* London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, p. 204.

[19] The World Bank, *World Bank Summary of Military expenditure*, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS, 2014.

[20] NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *Invited NATO members progress on military reforms*, http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=364, 05 11 2004.

[21] Elta EN, *Lithuania launches National Cyber Security Centre*, http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/lithuania-launches-national-cyber-security-centre.d?id=66804362, 02 02 2015.

[22] Buonanno L., Nugent N., "Policies and Policy Processes of the European Union", Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 292.

national security interests of Lithuania". According to the document, "only a secure environment is capable of ensuring the functioning of a mature democratic constitutional order, sustainable economic growth, protection of human rights and freedoms, viability of civil society". It presents the key risks, dangers and threats posed to these interests, the priorities, as well as long- and medium-term objectives of the national security system development, foreign, defence and domestic policies".[23]

The most important part of the document is the priorities, which are divided into two parts: a) foreign and defence policies; and b) domestic security policy. In the foreign and defence policy area, Lithuania seeks to create a secure environment and strengthen NATO, which remains "the key guarantee of a secure external environment of the Republic of Lithuania". Hence, the country seeks "to support preparation and review of the defence plans of NATO member countries, enhance NATO's visibility and military presence in Lithuania, stability of NATO's nuclear policy, create conditions for NATO training and exercise, contribute to the development of NATO's capabilities aimed at addressing new (energy, cyber, information security) threats and implementation of smart defence projects". For its part, Lithuania sets the target of increasing the national defence budget and remaining proactive in areas such as the EU's Eastern Partnership policy, common energy policy, as well as continuing strategic partnerships with strategic parties, such as the United States.

The development of capabilities of response to external and internal risks, dangers and threats, as well as intelligence and counterintelligence activities, and the interoperability with the respective systems of NATO, the EU and other countries, are emphasized among domestic security priorities. Specific attention is paid to non-conventional security threats: energy, cyber, information security. Energy security is among the key issues, as the aim of a sustainable and uninterruptible energy supply and the reduction of dependence of national energy systems on a monopolistic external energy supplier are described as vital to national security. Information threats, which are described as "actions of state and non-state entities in the international and national information space aimed at spreading biased and misleading information", are distinguished, with the aim to "create a public information policy which protects against a negative effect of information directed against the State and its citizens". Furthermore, cyber threats, meaning "attacks on electronic communications networks and information systems aimed at disturbing the functio-

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[23] Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *Lithuania: National Security Strategy 2012*, http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=156893, 26 06 2012.

ning of the infrastructure of economic sectors of strategic importance", are to be tackled with the "creation of a national co-ordination system in the area of cyber security".

While the national security strategy was not renewed as of the beginning of 2015, an additional document, the "Agreement between the Lithuanian Parliamentary Parties Regarding the Defence Policy for 2012–2016", was also signed in 2012. The core of it remains the same as in the previous document(s), where NATO is described as "a reliable organization of collective security and defence that guarantees the security and defence of its members". Hence, Lithuanian politicians see it as a base for national security and aim to "actively support the initiatives of closer cooperation among the allies, which reinforce the readiness of the Alliance to respond to security challenges and possible threats". [24]

An even bolder approach was taken in an Agreement on the Strategic Guidelines for the 2014–2020 Foreign, Security and Defence Policies, signed by all Lithuanian Parliament parties in March, 2014. According to the document, Russia's recent actions in Ukraine pose a challenge to the security of the region. Therefore, the following clear priorities were addressed:

- Strengthen participation in Euro Atlantic institutions, as EU and NATO, especially United States, ensure Lithuania's stability and security;
- Focus on Russia's attempted historic revisionism with an aim to distort historic facts;
- Implement priorities of energy policy, such as implementation of Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP), ensure functioning of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Klaipėda and etc.
- Increase defence budget to 2 percent of GDP until 2020;
- Increase the effect of deterrence by ensuring safety of borders with Russia, Belarus, conducting joint exercises with NATO allies and etc.

Another important strategic document that is deeply rooted in more broadly adopted documents on national security is the "National Energy Independence Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania", which states that after closing the Ignalina Atomic Plant, the energy security level of Lithuania dropped to only 45 percent. Therefore, the strategy was adopted with the medium and long term goals to increase this number to 80 percent. [25] The targeted security

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[24] Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *Agreement between the Lithuanian Parliamentary Parties Regarding the Defense Policy for 2012–2016*, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=4030&p_d=124804&p_k=2, 08 05 2012.

[25] *National Energy Independence Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania,* http://www.encharter.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Energy_policies_and_legislation/Lithuania_2012_National_Energy_Independence_Strategy_ENG.pdf, 26 06 2012.

level is intended to be reached by finalizing four strategic projects that would help diversify the import of energy resources, fully integrate into European energy networks and lower the influence of monopolist 'players' in the field.

Hence, there are three pillars of security priorities that can be derived from the abovementioned strategic documents:

Table 1. **The three pillars of Lithuanian security priorities**

Military security, with a strong emphasis on NATO (V article, military exercises, defence planning)	Energy security, with focus on strategic projects, such as LNG terminal, BEMIP and a target of energy independence

Information-cultural security, with focus on increased activity of Russia's propaganda

3. Russia's Aggression in Ukraine – a Challenge to European Security

Three international organizations—the European Union, NATO and the Organization of European Security and Cooperation (OSCE)—serve as the basis of the European security structure in post-Cold war Europe. Here, the EU was understood as an economic and political power, a normative goal for most European nations to become prosperous, democratic and modern states. NATO has become a military security guarantee, which was the main foreign policy objective for Eastern and Central European countries. Finally, the OSCE was understood as an international forum, which was to help solve all future conflicts in a peaceful and diplomatic way.

However, Russia feels thrown out of the post-Cold war European security structure. It perceives the current geopolitical situation as a threat to its power, mostly because the current European framework serves to spread Western values and ideas of liberal democracy eastwards, at the same time reducing Russia's influence. The most recent example to revert this trend has happened in Ukraine. At the end of 2013, the pro-Western movement in Kiev driven by the

Ukrainian President's decision not to sign the Association Agreement with EU, was perceived by Russia as a violation of the balance of power in Eastern Europe. Russia's response was direct intervention: deployment of soldiers in Crimea by order of President Vladimir Putin and, within a few weeks, annexation of this part of Ukraine; regular movement of troops and armaments to Ukraine across the uncontrolled border and the actual separation of Eastern Ukraine from the rest of the country. Such foreign policy is exactly the antithesis to Western political, economic and cultural penetration into the post-Soviet space. This time, however, Russia's response to Kiev's decisions was no longer the previously effectively employed "soft" methods, but military means.

The Kremlin's greatest aspiration is to reshape the current European security structure, where the West would recognize post-Soviet space as Russia's zone of influence. It would make her a "veto" holder allowing her to decide every move of the countries in this region. The resurgence of this Kremlin's revisionist policy is therefore becoming a serious challenge for stability in Europe, which is yet not enough assessed in the West.

Eventually revisionism leads to the four strategic objectives:

- The new formula in EU-US-Russia relations: curtailing of transatlantic relations and a tripartite collaboration on key political, economic, and military issues;
- Revision of the European security system: suspension of NATO expansion, prevention of new military bases and weapons being developed in Eastern Europe by granting Russia a kind of veto right in such decisions;
- New bilateral relations, favourable to Russia, with the EU;
- Creation and maintenance of the buffer zone between Russia and Western Europe.[26]

Russian-led escalation in Ukraine is threatening European security and stability. Therefore, many European countries are being pushed to rethink their security strategies and directions. Take Germany as an example: the Munich Security Conference in 2014 "marked the beginning of a subtle, yet fundamental shift in the German foreign and security policy"[27], with strong appeals to take more muscular voice in foreign affairs or even consider more military

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[26] Kaczmarski M., "Russia's Revisionist Policy Toward the West", *OSW Studies*, http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/110895/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/a402f179–b445–441f–82db–9197c34d1399/en/PRACE_33.pdf, 2009.

[27] Trenin D., "Takeaways From Munich-50", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=54404, 03 03 2014.

deployments.[28] Yet it is widely agreed that the post-Soviet Baltic States, which are still considered in Russia as the "near abroad"[29], are "particularly sensitive to prospects of a more belligerent Russia"[30], as discussions about whether these countries are the next ones to be attacked are becoming more prevalent.[31] Recent events led to the growth of hostile policies from Russia towards Lithuania:

- increased activity of Russian espionage and information campaigns in Lithuania, which are being carried out both using external (e.g. TV programmes from Russia) and internal (under cover activities via diplomatic offices, such as Russian embassy in Lithuania[32]) tools;
- economic pressure, such as trade embargo on food products, as Lithuania is considered to be the most sensitive EU member state in this sector in relationship with Russia[33];
- declarations by politicians and Kremlin-controlled media, which puts into question Lithuanian statehood and sovereignty; [34]
- increased number of airspace violations of military aircraft crossing the Lithuanian border (NATO military planes had to take over foreign aircraft more than 100 times - three times more in 2014 than in 2013).[35]

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[28] Smale A., *Spurred by Global Crises, Germany Weighs a More Muscular Policy,* http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/world/europe/spurred-by-global-crises-germany-weighs-a-more-muscular-foreign-policy.html?_r=1, 01 02 2014.

[29] A term, coined in early 1990s, which emphasizes that Russia "had yet to come to terms with the loss of territory in the former Soviet Union" and "unwillingness to recognize the sovereignty of newly independent republics" (Lane T., *Lithuania: Stepping Westward,* Routledge, 2014, p. 204.)

[30] BBC, *Baltic states seek defense against Russian threat*, http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-echochambers-29766667, 27 10 2014.

[31] See, for example, *Are the Baltic States Next?*, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/are-the-baltic-states-next-10103; *Russia is starting to use the same line on Baltic countries that it used to invade Ukraine*, http://www.vox.com/2014/10/1/6880329/russia-baltic-threats-ukraine-estonia; *Baltic security: Tensions on the frontier,* http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/13469356-5829-11e4-b331-00144feab7de.html#axzz3LDyYAqNV.

[32] State Security Department, *Lithuanian State Security Department Annual Review 2013* , http://www.vsd.lt/Files/Documents/635379270413750000.pdf.

[33] Kaža J. and Kangsepp L., *Baltic Countries Fear Impact of Russian Food Sanctions on Business*, http://www.wsj.com/articles/baltic-countries-fear-impact-of-russian-food-sanctions-on-business-1407437297, 07 08 2014.

[34] For example, Russian president Putin openly questions Lithuanian membership in NATO, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/23253, while Renewed Russian military doctrine states that "increased capacity of North Atlantic Treaty Organization <...>" and "<...> deployment of NATO troops in the territories close to Russian Federation <...>" are main external military dangers to Russia, http://news.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf; Putin also accused Lithuania of training Ukrainian self-defence units, who made a "coup" in Ukraine, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6763; Furthermore, Putin 'privately threatened to invade Poland, Romania and the Baltic states', http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11106195/Putin-privately-threatened-to-invade-Poland-Romania-and-the-Baltic-states.html.

[35] AP, *Surge of Russian aircraft seen over Baltic Sea*, http://news.yahoo.com/surge-russian-aircraft-seen-over-baltic-sea-170649616.html, 20 11 2014.

The crisis in Ukraine sparked debates about the need to rethink Lithuanian strategic policies, including military, energy and others.[36] As the previous overview of strategic documents reveals, Russia was always regarded as a risk for Lithuania, yet it did not lead to practical decisions, as Lithuania's military capabilities were reduced, while there was also no substantial progress in the energy sector.

4. The perception of Lithuania: the development of priorities during the crisis

In order to answer the question of whether the crisis in Ukraine and the increased hostility of Russia led to practical developments in key areas of Lithuanian security, two separate factors need to be analysed:

- Prerequisites needed for successful security reform;
- In order to determine development of security policy, three key priorities, which were distinguished above: military, informational-cultural and energy need to be observed.

4.1 Prerequisites needed for successful security reform

According to Thanos P. Dokos, every country must develop a unique model for security reform, which is determined by specific social, political, historical and financial realities, as well as threats. Nevertheless, four common factors are of essential importance in the process of successful security sector transformation:

- Knowledge of defence and security sector issues. Security community, which consists of civil servants, journalists, academics, decision makers and others, must function effectively to develop successful priorities of reform;
- Realistic threat assessment. Threats, not finances, stakes, power struggles or ideological convictions should determine the exact threat and ways to strengthen security;
- Political will to respond to the threat. Without political will a popula-

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[36] Elta EN, *Lithuanian State Defence Council to review national defence plans*, http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/lithuanian-state-defence-council-to-review-national-defence-plans.d?id=66515542#ixzz3LFfCOS bM>-plans.d?id=66515542, 27 11 2014.

tion will not be persuaded to support and find the resources for reform. Political leadership need to recognise the reality of security threat;
• Cooperation with allies and assistance. The smaller a country is, the more so.[37]

In the case of Lithuania, three conditions could be regarded as met, while one requires additional research. First, a review of Lithuanian security strategies and documents proves that Lithuanian decisionmakers and experts regularly outlined key threats (with an emphasis on Russia) and ways to improve country's security (priorities in energy sector, increase of defence budget). While only a small part of the recommendations were implemented, a lack of progress was not determined by lack of knowledge. Second, in current circumstances the threat is assessed realistically: as described above, Russia is the main factor for Baltic countries, especially in the context of events in Ukraine, as it is widely agreed that it poses a challenge to European security environment. Third, political will could only be assessed in a review of implementation of key security priorities of Lithuania. Fourth, cooperation with allies and their assistance is clearly visible, with various measures implemented by United States unilaterally and NATO as a whole to reassure countries in Eastern Europe.

4.2 Development in the areas of Lithuanian security priorities

4.2.1. Military security

Lithuanian security priorities clearly state a long-lasting aim to become an integral member of NATO. In other words, Lithuania was seeking for a significant representation in the Alliance, because it was perceived as a security guarantee for a small country.

However, in spite of Article V in th eNATO treaty, security guarantees have often been put into question. The old member states of NATO were reluctant to strengthen the territorial defence of the new allies, "arguing that it may provoke Russia". Sceptics even pointed to the fact that these countries are almost "indefensible"[38] due to their geopolitical factors. Furthermore, Germany,

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[37] Dokos T.P., *Security Sector Transformation in Southeastern Europe and the Middle East*, OS Press, 2007, p. 9–10.
[38] The Economist, *Knocking at the clubhouse door*, http://www.economist.com/node/760771, 30 08 2001.

France and other countries heavily invested in Russian military programmes[39] and increased their dependence on Russian gas (e.g. Nord Stream, which connects Russia and Germany). Lastly NATO member states, including Lithuania, decreased defence expenditures: U.S. defence expenditure has grown from 50% to 70% of overall NATO expenditures. Among NATO members, only the United States, Greece, the UK and Estonia spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence.[40]

The crisis in Ukraine has come out as a catalyst to implement practical decisions to strengthen military capabilities. As there was a consensus among all political parties, the Lithuanian Parliament for the first time after independence considerably increased the defence budget, which grew by 32 percent to 425 million Euros, or 1,11 percent of GDP, in 2015,[41] with an aim of 2 percent of GDP in 2020. It is clearly a new trend after a decade of reduced defence spending and a step forward towards implementation of long-lasting target of NATO's recommended defence spending. According to Mark Galeotti, this decision is "a sure sign threat from Russia taken seriously".[42] Moreover, Lithuania made a decision to reintroduce military conscription, which was abolished in 2008, because, according to Chief of Defence of Lithuania Jonas Vytautas Žukas, "geopolitical situation has changed [and] the professional [military] service does not receive as many soldiers as Lithuania needs"[43].

The Ukrainian crisis also served as stimulus for the Alliance to reconsider its approach towards countries that neighbour Russia. The United States moved to reassure its Eastern and Central European partners, for which the European Reassurance Initiative of up to $1 billion was launched, with measures such as:

- Increasing exercises, training, and rotational presence across Europe but especially on the territory new NATO states;

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[39] For example, German defense contractor Rheinmetall recently built combat training facility in Russia, worth around 120 million euros, but it was put into hold due to Crimean referendum; France built two 1-billion euros worth Mistral-class helicopter carriers for Russia (European countries are selling arms to Russia while condemning it over Ukraine, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/european-countries-are-selling-arms-to-russia-while-condemning-it-over-ukraine/2014/06/16/6ad20143-ffce-4b45-a063-bea132fa0123_story.html.

[40] Lorenz W., "NATO Narrows Military Gap on Its Eastern Flank", *PISM Strategic File*, No. 20 (56), p. 4, www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=18080, 09 2014.

[41] Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, *Lithuanian Defence Budget will increase by 32 pct in 2015 to make 1.11 pct of GDP*, http://www.kam.lt/en/news_1098/current_issues/lithuanian_defence_budget_will_increase_by_32_pct_in_2015_to_make_1.11_pct_of_gdp.html, 04 12 2014.

[42] Mark Galeotti Twitter, https://twitter.com/MarkGaleotti/status/541239560924303360, 06 12 2014.

[43] AP, *Lithuania to reinstate compulsory military service amid Ukraine tensions,* http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/24/lithuania-reinstate-compulsory-military-service, 24 02 2015.

- Deploying detachments of U.S. planners to augment the capability to design and host a broad range of training and exercise opportunities;
- Increasing the responsiveness of U.S. forces to reinforce NATO by exploring initiatives such as the prepositioning of equipment and improvements to other reception facilities and infrastructure in Europe;
- Increasing participation by the U.S. Navy in NATO naval force deployments, including more persistent deployments to the Black and Baltic seas;
- Building the partner capacity of close friends such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.[44]

Furthermore, the NATO Wales Summit, which took place in September 2014, was historic because "for the first time in a quarter-century, the alliance is increasingly reverting its gaze eastward".[45] The NATO Readiness Action Plan, which provides a coherent and comprehensive package of necessary measures to respond to the changes in the security environment on NATO's borders, was agreed upon, with concrete measures such as:

- Preparation of more detailed contingency plans that would be reviewed and upgraded regularly taking into account a newly emerged security threats;
- Establishment of permanent command-and-control assets and deployment of vehicles, weapons, and other equipment for the High Readiness Joint Task Force in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania;
- Creation of "spearhead" Very High Readiness Joint Task Force of 4,000 troops, which would be combat-ready within two to five days.[46] At the end of 2014, Lithuania was the first among NATO countries to create such forces, comprised of roughly 2,500 soldiers from existing units, which will be ready to react to a threat within 2 to 24 hours.[47]

Additionally, the largest ever military training, "Iron Sword 2014", took place in November 2014 in Lithuania, with 2,500 troops from 9 allied coun-

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[44] The White House, *FACT SHEET: European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners*, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/03/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-and-other-us-efforts-support, 03 06 2014.

[45] Bieri M., "NATO after Wales: Dealing with Russia – Next Steps", *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, No. 161 (10), http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/184352/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/32ab5e58-4889-4940-9012-b487cfa437c5/en/CSSAnalyse161-EN.pdf, 2014.

46 NATO, *NATO Wales Summit Declaration*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm, 05 09 2014.

[47] Elta EN, *Lithuania starts forming rapid response force,* http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/lithuania-starts-forming-rapid-response-force.d?id=66285662, 03 11 2014.

tries in total.[48] Along with confirmation that US troops will remain on the ground as long as it will be necessary "to deter Russian aggression"[49], the latest moves of the Alliance serve as a security guarantee for Lithuania, which is finally being fully (and practically) integrated into NATO's security plans.

4.2.2. Information Security

Russia demonstrated a new type of warfare in Ukraine, which is a huge concern to other neighbouring countries. One of the most important parts of this undeclared 'hybrid' war is an information war and the use of propaganda to fuel the conflict. The Department of Strategic Communication of the Military of Lithuania counted that Russia officially spends more than 15 billion roubles a year to support Russian media and culture abroad. This is more than the entire defence budget of Lithuania.[50]

Various initiatives responded to Russia's growing informational activity in the region even before the crisis in Ukraine. After the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, a National Security Strategy was adopted.[51] Later in 2013 a first-ever public report on national threats was published by State Security Department (VSD).[52] Even though the first report was criticized for being too abstract, the second report[53] was more profound, an important part of which was dedicated to analysis of strengthening Russia's espionage, cyber and information attacks, as well as Russian information and ideology politics.

As a reaction to the geopolitical developments and growing spectre propaganda, Lithuania, together with Estonia, United Kingdom and Denmark, proposed that the European Commission create an action plan, a task which was approved by EU leaders in March, 2015. The immediate work for the

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[48] Lithuanian Armed Forces, *Iron Sword 2014*, http://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/international_military_ exercises/iron_sword_2014.html, 06 11 2014.

[49] Reuters, *U.S. troops to remain in Baltics, Poland next year*, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/23/ us-ustroops-baltics-idUSKCN0J70V520141123?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews, 23 11 2014.

[50] Pancerovas D., *Rusija propagandai skiria daugiau pinigų, nei Lietuva – savo gynybai,* [Russia finances its propaganda more than Lithuania funds its defence], http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/ karo-zona/a-784-464264, 04 11 2014.

[51] LR Seimas, Nutarimas dėl Nacionalinio saugumo strategijos patvirtinimo [Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Decission to approve National Security Strategy], http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska. showdoc_l?p_id=429234, 01 07 2012.

[52] LR Valstybės saugumo departamento 2012 m. veiklos ataskaita visuomenei [State Security Department activity review 2012], http://www.vsd.lt/vsd_ataskaita_20130607.pdf, 2013.

[53] LR Valstybės saugumo departamentas, *Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas,* [Lithuanian State Security Departament, Analysis of threats to National Security], http://www.vsd.lt/Files/ Documents/635306548879220000.pdf, 01 07 2012.

experts is to prepare a framework on the "correction and fact-checking of misinformation" and to "develop an EU narrative through key messages, articles, op-eds, factsheets, infographics, including material in Russian language".[54] It is considered the first step by the EU to tackle propaganda.

Furthermore, in order to strengthen the capacity to resist to cyber-attacks and centralize the supervision of the cyberspace, a National Cyber Security Centre, which was in planning for several years, was finally initiated and created by the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania, and was launched on 1 January 2015. The Centre will be reform the Communications and Information Systems Service (RIST) under the Ministry of National Defence and, in close cooperation to other authorities such as the Police Department, the Communications Regulatory Authority and others will form joint military and civil capabilities.[55] The establishment of a National Cyber Security Centre is a first step towards stricter control of informational and cyber space, but it is still in the development process, specifically evaluating the consequences of the decisions taken.

4.2.3. Energy security

The many interconnections of the post-Soviet states in various sectors with Russia is still an issue that to a great extent influences the development of the states. Even though Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, its huge dependence on Russia in the energy sector was named the main challenge for a full-fledged integration into European Union[56]. Thus, an energy policy that reduced Russia's influence in the energy sector was chosen as a strategic goal, named in all strategic documents adopted by different governments, as presented in previous sections.

As previously mentioned, the targeted security level in National energy independence strategy is intended to be reached by finalizing four strategic projects that would help to diversify the import of energy resources, fully integrate into European energy networks and lower the influence of monopolist companies:

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[54] Reuters, *EU gears up for propaganda war with Russia*, http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/19/us-ukraine-crisis-eu-propaganda-idUSKBN0MF26A20150319, 19 03 2015.

[55] Elta EN, *Lithuania launches National Cyber Security Centre,* http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/lithuania-launches-national-cyber-security-centre.d?id=66804362, 02 01 2015.

[56] *National Energy Independence Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania,* p. 18–19.

- NordBalt electricity cable connection between Lithuania and Sweden;
- LNG terminal in Klaipėda;
- LitPol Link electricity cable connection between Lithuania and Poland;
- Visaginas Atomic Plant (VAE).[57]

However, if one wants to evaluate the impact of the ongoing geopolitical crisis in the field of energy in Lithuania, one must keep in mind the process of internal politics, priorities of government in power and other factors. The previous government adopted a national energy independence strategy; therefore, it was possible that a new government had different priorities in all or some directions of Lithuania's energy policy. Nevertheless, the program of government that stepped into the office at the end of 2012, included three of four priority projects: NordBalt, LitPol Link and LNG terminal. As for the Visaginas Atomic Plant, because the advisory referendum for building a new atomic power plant was not in favor of it, a "review" was called for and it is not on the current political agenda.[58]

Therefore, it could be concluded that the political consensus regarding the energy policy in Lithuania was reached and allowed to maintain the stable development of most of the strategic projects. Undoubtedly, the rise of tension between Russia and the West led to renewed threats from Russia regarding the possible halt of gas export to the EU just before the winter of 2014[59]. It was a signal that the need to move towards the diversification of energy sources is even more essential. Therefore, the 27th of September, 2014 became a hugely symbolic day as the LNG carrier, an essential part of the LNG terminal, arrived at the Klaipėda port, calling it a "political not economic victory", because it abolished Russia's monopoly as a sole supplier of gas to Lithuania.[60]

Nevertheless, both the NordBalt and LitPol Link projects are being developed as projected and the NordBalt project is scheduled to start at the end of 2015.[61] Completed projects, along with the LNG terminal, are predicted to increase the level of Lithuania's energy security by 20 percent.[62] All in all, the

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[57] *Ibid,* 19.

[58] Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *Šešioliktos vyriausybės 2012-2016 metų programa* [Lithuanian Government programme 2012-2016], http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439761.

[59] EU Observer, *Russia threatens EU states with gas cut-offs*, http://euobserver.com/foreign/125776, 26 09 2014.

[60] LRT, *SGD terminalas – politinė, o ne ekonominė pergalė?* [LNG Terminal – political, not economic victory?], http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/4/73979/sgd_terminalas_politine_o_ne_ekonomine_pergale_, 27 10 2014.

[61] Verslo žinios, *Nordbalt" transformatoriai pasiekė krantą* [„Nordbalt" transformers reached the coast], http://vz.lt/article/2014/12/11/nordbalt-transformatoriai-pasieke-kranta, 11 12 2014.

[62] *National Energy Independence Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania,* p. 19.

geopolitical crisis has not had any major influence on fostering reforms in the energy sector because there is a political consensus in all major strategic projects, except the Visaginas Atomic Plant. No new initiatives were presented, even though the European Union and its Member States started a broad discussion about European energy security (e.g. European Commission presented an European Energy Security Strategy[63]).

Conclusions

This paper provides an overview of Russia's role in the security priorities of Lithuania after restoration of independence, as well as an analysis of the impact of recent Russian aggression to Ukraine. Analysis of strategic documents adopted by various Lithuanian governments show that three key strategic pillars could be regarded as constantly emphasized security priorities. These are:

- Military security, with a strong emphasis on NATO;
- Information-cultural security, with focus on increased Russia's activity;
- Energy security, with target of energy independence from Russia

While concluding that Russia was always regarded as a risk, it was also noted that this factor did not lead to practical decisions to strengthen Lithuanian readiness to react. For example, the Lithuanian defence budget was diminishing ever since joining NATO in 2004, and almost no projects were implemented to reduce vulnerabilities in the energy sector.

These issues become even more important due to the changes in the international security environment. Russia has perceived a growing influence of Western organizations, mainly EU via Eastern Partnership policy, on the post-Soviet region as a direct threat to its power and influence. To oppose these developments, Russia acted not only with "soft" (propaganda, political and economic influence) but also "hard" (military) power in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014-2015). These actions threatened European security and stability. Therefore, many European countries were forced to rethink their security strategies. Post-Soviet states, such as the Baltics, are particularly sensitive due to close proximity and borders with Russia. As a result, the crisis served as an incentive for Lithuania to rethink its strategic policies.

According to theory, four conditions are needed for effective security reform: knowledge of defence and security sector issues; realistic threat assess-

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[63] *European Energy Security Strategy.*

ment; cooperation with allies and assistance; and a political will to respond to the threat. In the case of Lithuania, all of the conditions were met, hence the conditions for reform were favourable.

Out of three security pillars, the greatest progress was made in the area of military security. The crisis in Ukraine forced NATO to strengthen its defence capabilities in Eastern Europe as a deterrence to aggressive Russia's policy. Moreover, political consensus was reached in Lithuania for the first time since 2004 to raise military expenditures from 0,88 to 1,11 percent in 2015, with the aim of reaching 2 percent in 2020. Lastly, military conscription was reintroduced in order to tackle the problem of shortage of soldiers.

In the field of informational and cyber security, a National Cyber Security Centre was introduced and launched on 1 January 2015, which should expand the current capabilities of security in informational and cyber space. Furthermore, Lithuania, together with three other EU countries, initiated a new policy in the EU in order to tackle Russian propaganda and improve the information environment, especially for Russian-language minorities. It is the first EU-wide policy dedicated to counterbalancing the Russian efforts to create a favourable information environment. However, domestic plans to introduce a Russian television channel for the Russian-speaking minority in Lithuania did not come into fruition.

Energy security was least influenced by the geopolitical disruptions in 2014, because strategic trends to reduce vulnerabilities were adopted even before the crisis. The main strategic projects included in the national energy security strategy are in process, except the Visaginas Atomic Plant (which was an issue of the political and public debate until the referendum held in 2012; currently the issue is out of main political agenda). The LNG terminal served as a symbolic milestone of achievements towards energy independence; however, no new initiatives emerged in 2014.

It may be concluded that most of the Lithuanian security priorities and directions were agreed upon long before the recent geopolitical shifts, yet the lack of political will and the public's unwillingness to invest in security made it difficult to implement them. Hence, the crisis in Ukraine acted as a catalyst for increasing the country's readiness and security.

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